

usually following representations by veterans organizations that the rates had become out of date because of the advancing economy. These increases were usually on a flat percentage basis approximating what was considered to be fair and reasonable at the time.

In January, 1968, the rate of pension for a veteran whose pensioned disabilities were assessed at 100 per cent, and who was unmarried with no dependants, was \$265 a month. A 10 per cent increase was granted on April 1, 1971, to bring the rate to \$292 a month. The indexing of pensions was instituted, so that because of changes in the consumer price index the rate was increased to \$302.51 a month, effective January 1, 1972.

It was recognized that some better method of determining the basic amount of disability pension had to be found, and in 1972 a joint study group on the basic rate of pension was established. This study group had representation from the veterans organizations as well as from the Canadian Pension Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Their report referred to the historic principle that pension was based on the earning power of a man in the class of an untrained labourer. On the basis that it would be more meaningful and simpler to administer, the joint study group recommended that the basic rate of pension be directly related to the earning power or unskilled categories of public servants. It also recommended that neither the pre-enlistment nor post-discharge financial condition of the disabled veteran should affect the amount of pension, but that it continue to be paid on the basis of the percentage of incapacity caused by the pensioned disability to perform work in the general labour market. If, for example, a veteran lost a limb, he should be pensioned for the loss of the limb and not because it was or was not particularly useful in his trade or profession.

In the upshot, the joint study group recommended that the salary, after tax, of a composite group, composed of five classes of unskilled public servants be accepted as the basis on which the disability pension should be based. This was done, and in June, 1973, Bill C-202 was enacted which established the basic rate of pension in relation to five named classes of unskilled public servants. This resulted in an over-all increase of pension at that time of some 24 per cent. Since then, there have been annual increases based on consumer price index changes, so that today the 100 per cent disability pensioner, unmarried with no dependants or other allowances, receives \$556.62 a month.

In 1974, 1975 and 1976, because the pension rate was tied to the consumer price index, it was slightly more than it would have been if it had been tied only to the five categories of unskilled public servant. This year, however, after deduction of income tax, the spread between the income of the unskilled public servant and the pensioner has reached the point where the pension rate is \$44.72 a month behind that of the composite group of unskilled public servants.

I am well aware of the spread and have the matter under study. Members of the House are aware, I am sure, that the Canadian Pension Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the other agencies for which I am responsible,

are constantly seeking ways and means of improving the lot of the veterans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn.

Motion withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being 6.30 o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At 6.31 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STATUTE LAW (METRIC CONVERSION) AMENDMENT ACT, 1976

AMENDMENTS TO WHEAT BOARD ACT TO FACILITATE CONVERSION TO METRIC SYSTEM

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Marchand (for Mr. Chrétien) that Bill C-23, to facilitate conversion to the metric system of measurement, be read the third time and do pass, and the amendment thereto of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton).

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill C-23 and the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton), seconded by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), suggesting that the bill should not be read the third time now but that the committee should have an opportunity to reconsider certain of its clauses.

I have followed the debate closely and I appreciate what has been said by the majority of members taking part. It is obvious to me, from listening to the debate, that the farmers have nobody to speak for them on the government side since no one on that side has participated in the debate on this amendment.

● (2010)

Mr. Paproski: Either that or they are afraid.

Mr. Elzinga: Had it not been for the official opposition, this bill would have been already enacted into legislation and our farming population would have found on February 1 that they would have to keep their figures in terms of hectares and tonnes. The Liberal administration thought that this bill would go through with a short debate prior to the Christmas recess, but as is so often the case western members sensed that this